



**US Army Corps
of Engineers
Great Lakes and
Ohio River Division**

Public Notice

Public Notice No:
CELRD-CM-P 00-#03

Date:
12 OCTOBER 2000

**NOTICE OF REPORT
OHIO RIVER ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION
OHIO RIVER**

**FINAL
INTEGRATED DECISION DOCUMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Completion of Study

Notice is hereby given that the Commander of the Corps of Engineers' Great Lakes and Ohio River Division (Cincinnati, Ohio), working in conjunction with the Corps' Commanders in Louisville, Huntington, and Pittsburgh Districts, announces the completion of a study of ecosystem restoration. The study area is located along the Ohio River corridor within the States of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The study was prepared under the authority provided in a resolution adopted by the Committee on Public Works of the United States Senate dated 16 May 1955. Further authority was provided in a resolution adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Public Works and Transportation on 11 March 1982.

Ohio River Navigation

The mainstem of the Ohio River extends from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Cairo, Illinois, where the Ohio joins the Mississippi River - providing 981 miles of commercially navigable channel. Year-round navigation is provided by a system of 20 locks and dams and annual maintenance dredging of the channels.

Problems & Needs

Human activities have influenced the ecological resources of the Ohio River and its floodplain for over 200 years. Forest harvest, agriculture, industrialization, water pollution, river impoundment, and a variety of other factors have affected environmental quality. Although, in recent years, much has been accomplished to improve water quality and lessen the impacts of human activities, many habitats remain in need of improvement for the benefit of a wide-variety of species. Approximately 1,235,000-acres, or 65 percent of the total forested floodplain, was lost or converted to other uses between 1800 and 1970. Island acreage has decreased by 43 percent or 10,900 acres

since 1900. These significant losses have reduced available habitat for endangered species such as Indiana bats and Interior Least Terns. In addition, the lock and dam navigation structures have greatly reduced the natural riffles and sandbars. As a result, aquatic habitat is limited for various endangered species of freshwater mussels.

The goal of ecosystem restoration is to reverse the adverse impacts of human activity and restore ecological resources, including fish and wildlife habitats, to previous levels of productivity. It is not a goal to attain a higher level than would have existed under natural conditions in the absence of human activity or disturbance.

Report Conclusions and Recommendations

The Ohio River Ecosystem Restoration Study Report - an integrated Decision Document and Environmental Assessment -- provides the following conclusions and recommendations for authorization of an Ohio River Ecosystem Restoration Project:

A comprehensive, managed ecosystem restoration program is needed for the Ohio River corridor consistent with current law and Corps policy.

A recommendation for authorization of a long-term program, with maximum Federal funding of \$10 million annually, for each of the first five years, and \$15 million annually for the remainder of the program.

The creation of a partnership, composed of representatives from government resource agencies, universities, and other environmental concerns, for monitoring, evaluating and managing the Ohio River ecosystem.

A corridor-wide ecosystem needs assessment and strategy, or Program Implementation Plan, would be developed initially to refine ecosystem goals and prioritize restoration efforts.

Implementation of site-specific projects to accomplish program goals. Non-Federal sponsors would fund 35 percent of site-specific project first costs and 100% of operation, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and replacement.

Coordination

In addition to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and natural resource agencies of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania were all active participants in the study process.

Public Involvement

Public scoping workshops were held in November 1998 in three metropolitan areas representing the lower, middle, and upper reaches

of the Ohio River. The purpose and schedules of the meetings were published in the Wednesday, October 21, 1998 *Federal Register*. In addition, a Public Notice, announcing the meetings, was mailed to approximately 3,200 recipients. Recipients included various agencies, industries, and individuals. Public notices of the meetings were also published in the legal notices of several regional newspapers. The draft report, containing the recommendations of the study, was circulated for public review in August 2000. During this period, various Federal and state agencies, environmental organizations, and the public were afforded the opportunity to review the report. News Releases and Notices of Availability regarding this public comment period were mailed to over 3,200 recipients.

Review and Authorization Process

Prior to adoption of the proposed program, the study evaluations and report findings will be reviewed by the Chief of Engineers and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. A coordinated review, including affected state and other Federal agencies, will also be accomplished at this time.

The Chief of Engineers will review the report and forward a recommendation to the Secretary of the Army. If the recommendation of the Chief of Engineers is significantly different from the recommendation coordinated with state and Federal agencies, interested parties will be afforded an opportunity to comment further prior to submission of the Chief's report to the Secretary. The Assistant Secretary of the Army, in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget, then establishes the Administration's position on whether the proposal should be recommended to Congress for authorization.

Views of Interested Parties

In accordance with Corps procedure, the report is being referred for review to the Policy Division (CECW-AR) in Washington, D.C. Interested parties may present written views on the report to the Chief of Engineers and the Secretary of the Army through CECW-AR. Such communication should be mailed to:

Policy Review Branch (CECW-AR)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G. Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20314

Comments should be mailed in time to reach CECW-AR within 30 days from the date of this notice. Copies of information received by mail will be regarded as public information unless the correspondence requests otherwise. Such a request will limit the usefulness of the information because of the need for full public disclosure of all factors relevant to the decision.

Final Action by the Chief of Engineers

The Chief of Engineers will not submit a recommendation to the Secretary on the report until after the expiration of this notice or any extension thereof that may be granted, and full consideration of all information submitted in response thereto.

Report Information

Further information may be obtained from Michael Holley, Project Manager; U.S. Army Engineer District, Louisville; P.O. Box 59 ATTN: PM-C; Louisville, KY 40201-0059 (Telephone: 502-315-6783). Interested parties may obtain either a CD-ROM disk or paper copy of the Ohio River Ecosystem Restoration Study Report, at no charge, from the Louisville District Engineer. Additional CD-ROM disks or paper copies may be purchased at the reproduction costs shown below:

Study Report (CD-ROM Disk)	\$ 5.00 each
Study Report (Paper Copy)	\$15.00 each

Checks or money orders should be made payable to "FAO, USAED, Louisville" and mailed to:

U.S. Army Engineer District, Louisville
ATTN: CELRL-PM-P
P.O. Box 59
Louisville, Kentucky 40201-0059

Copies of all the report documents will also be on file at the public review locations listed on the following page.

Please provide the information contained in this notice to any person known by you to be interested in the report, and who, not being known to the Division Engineer, does not receive a copy of this public notice.



ROBERT H. GRIFFIN
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Commander and Division Engineer